WGA
WHERE GRACE ABOUNDS

Governor Roy Romer
136 State Capitol Bldg.
Denver, CO 80218

Dear Gov. Romer:

I am concerned about the "gay rights" debate. Building toward a climax, it comes before the voters of Colorado in November.

It occurs to me that the people of our state are not informed enough about this issue to cast an educated vote. Neither are they likely to get help from following the current media coverage. The media seem content to juxtapose extremist accusations, without delving into the complexities faced by the people affected by the conflict.

It has become frustrating to me, a person in varying degrees of conflict with both sides of this debate, that the real issue at stake is rarely addressed adequately. There are hundreds, even thousands, of people on both sides who believe their personal rights will be restricted by the passage or defeat of this ordinance. Someone must speak to the incredible conflict these people are experiencing, while right and wrong, defined differently by both sides, are debated.

In my opinion, what is needed are roundtable discussions with representatives from both sides. We need to create an environment of mutual respect and concern for the individuals affected by the initiative; we need to work together on practical ways to solve the dilemma confronting our city and nation.

The dilemma is real. Many homosexuals will watch the election returns and interpret the results as a barometer of Colorado's opinion of their value as human beings. Devout religious people of all faiths will stand in booths and agonize over a no-way-to-win vote. They must decide whether to cast their ballots against Amendment 2, thereby striking a blow against discrimination, which everyone "knows" is un-American. Or they might vote for the initiative, thereby refusing to give civil rights status to whose behavior they also "know" to be immoral.

As if the conflicts just described were not enough, what about the ones who are homosexual and also Christian or Muslim or Jewish, etc.? What can they be thinking and feeling about the controversy?

Yes, I, too, have a bias. I don't think that the fight for "gay rights" belongs in the political arena, but I do believe that we are all responsible for its being there. The gay activists made it a political issue, but society, including the Christian community, must bear its own share

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of responsibility. We allowed discrimination to go on; we behaved as if homosexuals were outside of God's grace; we left them few means to protect the human rights that are theirs as well as ours.

So, what do we do now? How do we unravel the tangled mass of fear, ignorance, neglect, overreaction, and pride?

I propose that you, with the authority of your office, call for an exploration of the pertinent issues. A public forum, a format which can shed light on all sides, must be covered in its entirety by the media. This will go a long way toward meeting the needs of people who are trying to study the matter.

I further propose that, whether Amendment 2 is passed or defeated, you form a task force, to work together on ways to ensure the basic rights of all concerned. Then, when a plan is agreed upon, I ask that a committee, made up of people from diverse backgrounds, be appointed to implement and follow up on those plans. With such a task force in place, Colorado could avoid the deep division created in other states over the homosexual issue. Moreover, we would be pioneers carving out a better way of settling things.

I hope you consider my ideas as you strive to uphold the human rights of all the citizens of our state. I believe that the silent majority is as frustrated as I am, and would welcome a relief from our current adversarial system.

Sincerely,

Mary R. Heathman

Mary R. Heathman
Executive Director
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